

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 10:30

11 FEBRUARY 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
11 February 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam as of 1030 EST

The 11 February Air Strikes

1. One hundred nine US carrier-based aircraft participated in a retaliatory air strike against the Chanh Hoa army barracks north of Dong Hoi at approximately 0100 EST today. This installation is adjacent to Dong Hoi airfield and has an estimated capacity of 2000 troops. It is believed to house elements of the PAVN 325th Infantry Division.

2. The US strike aircraft encountered poor weather conditions and light to moderate ground fire in the target area. Three planes, including one photorecon aircraft accompanying the mission, were lost. However, two of the pilots were recovered.

3. Preliminary pilot reports indicate that the Chanh Hoa target area was severely damaged. At least three barracks complexes were observed to be burning heavily. Results of post-strike photo reconnaissance are not yet available. However, a verbal report from a post-strike aircraft describes many buildings blackened and standing without roofs or windows.

4. A combined US-South Vietnamese air strike involving 52 aircraft was conducted at approximately 0245 EST against the Chap Le army barracks. This complex, believed to contain the headquarters of the DRV 270th Independent Infantry Regiment, was also hit in the 8 February South Vietnamese air force attack. Photographic analysis of that strike shows light to moderate damage.

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5. All of the aircraft participating in the Chap Le attack have returned safely to their bases. Post-strike reconnaissance on the attack is not yet available. Returning pilots, however, report at least five buildings in the target area destroyed and several explosions at nearby AAA installations which were hit.

Communist Military Reaction

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8. No Chinese Communist or Soviet military reaction has been detected during the past twenty-four hours.

Developments in South Vietnam

9. Aggressive Viet Cong military activity continues in widespread areas of South Vietnam, although there have been no reports thus far of significant new enemy attacks today. The singling out of Americans as targets of violence, probably in retaliation for the airstrikes against the North, is indicated by the mutilation of three American advisers whose bodies were found yesterday when government troops recaptured a district town north of Saigon which had been overrun by the Viet Cong on 9 February. Confirmed US casualty figures in yesterday's terrorist bombing of the enlisted men's billet in Qui Nhon now stand at 2 dead and 18 wounded. Twenty three are still being sought in the debris.

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10. Simultaneous with the billet bombing, Viet Cong terrorists attacked a nearby police station with grenades, wounding two Vietnamese policemen. Two Viet Cong were captured. Seven other policemen were wounded in another grenade attack on an outpost near the billet, and a nearby power station was also attacked with grenades. Today, a fleet of some 50 junks, suspected by local officials of being Viet Cong, was dispersed off Qui Nhon by ARVN fire. Earlier reports of an "amphibious attack" by these junks have not been confirmed, and there is some possibility that the incident resulted from nervousness on the part of local officials shaken by earlier events in the town.

11. MACV reports that in the first ten days of February, there have been 213 US casualties, including 14 KIA and one MIA. 141 of these casualties resulted from last Sunday's attack on Pleiku. These figures apparently do not include losses sustained in the Qui Nhon terrorist bombing.

12. The military developments of the past few days have overshadowed the political maneuvering in Saigon, and have lent some urgency to the formation of a new government. Agreement seems to have been reached on the designation of Interior Minister Nguyen Luu Vien as premier, and an announcement is expected shortly. However, continuing conflicts among the principal power elements are reflected in the difficulty being experienced in selecting individual cabinet ministers.

DRV Internal Situation

13. The first post-strike report on conditions in North Vietnam has been received from the Canadian ICC representative in Hanoi. According to the report, there was no evidence of public concern evident in Hanoi as of 8 February, nor any outward signs of a renewed civil defense alert or special defense precautions.

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16. Peiping is moving cautiously while at the same time attempting to encourage Hanoi and to deter the US from moves to enlarge the conflict by increasingly belligerent propaganda. There has been a steady escalation in the Chinese war of words since 8 February and massive anti-US rallies are being staged all over China. The editorial blast in People's Daily on 10 February is very tough. It warns ominously that if the US is bent on spreading the war to China Peiping will "have no alternative but to go along with it to the very end," and that in such an event "the whole of Southeast Asia, the whole of Asia would be aflame with the revolutionary fire." The editorial notes that America's "meager force" in Asia is spread thinly over a "long arc from South Korea to Indochina", and that if the conflict were expanded, the "time, place and scale of the war" would be beyond US control.

17. This latest outburst contains Peiping's most specific public commitment to action in response to new US moves thus far. It is very carefully stated, however, in terms designed to give the Chinese wide freedom of choice as to their reaction. Speaking of a US decision to enlarge the struggle, Peiping asserts in the English language broadcast version of the editorial that "an invasion of the DRV is also an invasion of China" which the Chinese would be duty-bound to oppose with "concrete action." This is much more precise than the formulation used in the official statement about the Vietnam situation issued by Peiping on 8 February--and earlier following the Tonkin Gulf incident--which used the broader term "aggression." Thus refined, the Chinese promise to help Hanoi defend itself is firmest in the contingency Peiping probably regards as most remote, a major ground offensive against North Vietnam. In other more likely situations the Chinese leave themselves room for maneuver.

18. Peiping's latest statement implies that it expects more air strikes against the DRV but makes no promise of an immediate Chinese response. Instead, it claims that such attacks will never succeed in frightening the

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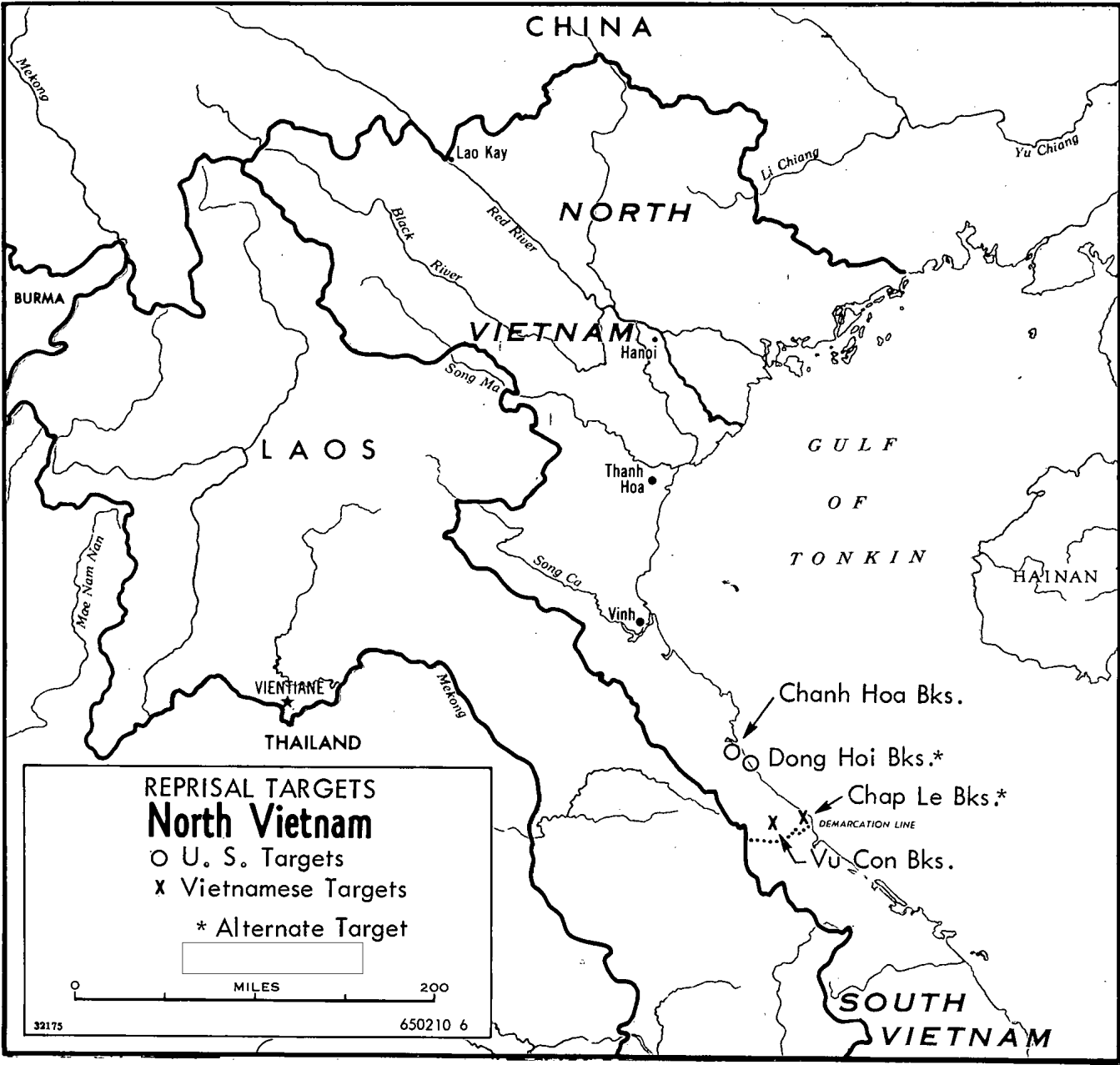
"South Vietnamese people" and declares that whatever the US does they will "certainly redouble their efforts to deal one heavy blow after another on the US aggressors."

Communist Political Developments

19. A joint Soviet-DRV statement was issued on 10 February following Kosygin's departure from Hanoi. It proved to be relatively bland and non-committal. The US reaffirmed its pledge to render "necessary assistance and support" to the DRV, but strongly implied in the statement that it intends to carry out the commitment step by step, carefully weighing the extent of its involvement against future US actions in Indochina. The statement asserted that "regular consultations" would be held on "measures which should be taken to strengthen" North Vietnamese defensive capabilities.

20. There was no indication in the statement that Kosygin had extracted a pledge of support from Hanoi on issues in contention in the Sino-Soviet dispute. No mention was made, for example, of the proposed meeting of the Communist "editorial commission" in Moscow on 1 March, thus casting doubt on whether the Soviets were able to win Hanoi's agreement to participate. The statement also failed to refer specifically to future Soviet economic assistance to North Vietnam. In a farewell speech in Hanoi, Kosygin mentioned only that an "exchange of views" on the subject had taken place.

21. The Soviet Premier is now in North Korea, after a short stop in Peiping for further talks with Chinese leaders including Mao and Liu Shao-chi. No information is available on these discussions. There are some indications that Kosygin's decision to include Pyongyang on his itinerary was hurriedly made. His trip adds to the thesis that the Soviet Union has begun a concerted effort to increase its overall influence with the Asian Communist parties. Since the new Kremlin leaders came to power, North Korea has dampened down its pro-Chinese polemics.



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